

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 20 as follows:

In a further embodiment of the invention, the invention describes a method of evaluating an educational program which, firstly, develops criteria which address the strengths and weaknesses of the educational program. The second step is to observe factors in the educational program, with each of the factors relating to one or more of the criteria. Again, the observation step includes information gathering techniques, including but not limited to collecting documents, surveys, conducting interviews, and classroom observation. Each factor is then assigned a numerical value. This numerical value is weighted and multiplied by the numerical value to give a weighted numerical value. The weighted numerical values of the factors are sorted to correspond with the one or more criteria to which the factor relates. The weighted numerical values are then averaged within each criterion to give a quantitative value to each criterion. An overall rating is then assigned to the educational program based on the quantitative value of the criteria.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 9, line 19 as follows:

In another embodiment of the invention, the invention comprises a system for evaluating an educational program which utilizes means for ~~means for~~ developing criteria which address strengths and weaknesses of the educational program, means for observing the criteria in the educational program, means for assigning a numerical value to the criteria; and, means for assigning an overall rating to the educational program based on the numerically valued criteria. The means for accomplishing each of these functions can be embodied in a series of papers filled out by a person, a paper database filled out by a person, an electronic database filled out by a person, or other tools for development, observation and assigning numbers.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 13, line 3 as follows (Note the only change here is the start of a new paragraph with the sentence beginning with the phrase "The language/reasoning factor..."):

The personal care routine factor looks at greeting and departure rituals, meal and snack schedule and procedures, nap and rest schedule and procedures, toileting and diapering schedule and procedures, health practices such as hand washing, appropriate clothing, and tooth brushing, and safety practices such as clean up of toys, emergency numbers, and presence of safety rules which are explained to the children.

The language/reasoning factor concerns the amount, presence and appropriateness of books and pictures, encouragement of children to communicate, use of logic play such as sequence cards, sorting games, number and math games, and informal use of language on individual bases.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 17, line 17 as follows:

The accreditation criteria reflects whether the educational program is accredited by appropriate state, local or federal institutions, or as discussed in more detail in the appendix hereto, by a nationally recognized professional association such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the National Association of Family Child Care. Moreover, such professional associations are typically non-governmental organizations, and such professional associations require a child care provider to complete an extensive self-study of all aspects of early child care and education. Moreover, such associations perform on-site visits to assure accreditation criteria are satisfied. Note that such non-governmental accrediting associations accredit a plurality of independently owned and operated child care facilities, as one skilled in the art will readily understand. In one embodiment of the invention, accreditation is required in order to achieve a four star rating. In another embodiment of the invention, two points are assigned to the accreditation criteria when accreditation is achieved and as maintained.

Please amend paragraph beginning on page 20, line 27 as follows:

α - In addition to required activities, staff AND at least 40% of parents as an aggregate identify activities in at least ~~[[2/6]]~~two of the six types of parent involvement.

α α - In addition to required activities, staff AND at least 60% of parents as an aggregate identify activities in at least ~~[[4/6]]~~four of the six types of parent invention. Program has a written, cohesive plan for parent involvement.

α α α - In addition to required activities, staff AND at least 75% of parents as an aggregate identify activities in at least ~~[[5/6]]~~five of the six types of parent involvement. Parent involvement is an integral part of an annual program plan and evaluation.

Please insert the attached "Appendix A" immediately after the paragraph beginning on page 27, line 13 and just before the claims.